PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Many people will probably fail to recognize the Villa d'Este they toured and admired, guidebook duly in hand, in the Villa d'Este they will encounter thanks to Leonardo dal Maso. The words of the author are particularly evocative as we are led back into the past and look behind the façade of the villa as it appears today discovering the reality of the remarkable and erudite « architectural garden » designed and brought to life four hundred years ago. Leonardo Dal Maso is certainly not new to such original cultural undertakings, the final result of which is essentially a recovery of a long buried, long forgotten heritage. Before the VILLA D'ESTE, he accomplished this noteworthy deed in other books written for Bonechi: « Rome of the Caesars, » « Rome of the Popes, » and « Archaeological Latium, » this latter in collaboration with Roberto Vighi. In short Dal Maso's signature is a hallmark of originality and scholarly rigor, perfectly blended in easily read texts.

Now we are ready to enter the Villa d'Este. It was built for a great and enlightened Renaissance cardinal: Ippolito d'Este. Ippolito was the son of Alfonso, third duke of Ferrara and his notorious wife, Lucrezia Borgia. The villa was designed by Pirro Ligorio, the renowned and celebrated Neapolitan architect who created a composition of such scenic impact for his patron Ippolito that it would be copied over and over again throughout Europe.

Dal Maso is somehow able to make the reader relive all the stages in the creation of the villa, such as the incredible feat of levelling the mountain of Tivoli, the building of the aqueducts, and the designing of the staircases and ramps. Each stage is brought to life with Dal Maso's special outlook: he does not limit himself to just seeing, he also wants to know, and when he knows, he then wants to fully understand. To achieve these goals, he goes further than collecting and analyzing facts and data, studying documents and prints of the day, carefully taking measurements of walls and paths, counting out the scudi *that the generous Cardinal handed out: he tries to become part of those times and those personages—it is almost as if he wants to think with their heads and see through their eyes. And the fountains are not only remarkable decorative elements but the whole, marbles and plants, walks and pauses, water and land, is firmly interwoven into a single symbolic message, like a mythical fairytale whose language is unfortunately lost to us.*

EDOARDO BONECHI